DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 878 HE 022 602

AUTHOR Puglisi, J. Thomas
TITLE An Undergraduate, Interdisciplinary Program in Gerontology.
INSTITUTION American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C.; North Carolina Univ., Charlotte.
SPONS AGENCY Administration on Aging (DHHS), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Oct 87
NOTE 12p.; This report is one of a group gathered by the AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project, funded by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education. For related documents, see HE 022 565-617, HE 022 619-643 and HE 022 645-659.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Curriculum; College Faculty; *College Programs; *Curriculum Development; *Faculty Development; *Gerontology; Higher Education; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Majors (Students); Models; Program Descriptions; State Universities
IDENTIFIERS *AASCU ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project; *University of North Carolina Charlotte

ABSTRACT

The program development project described in this report was undertaken at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to develop faculty expertise and experience in undergraduate teaching in gerontology and to lay the foundation for an interdisciplinary, undergraduate minor in gerontology. Three core courses for the minor in gerontology were developed, and five faculty received experience in teaching these courses. In addition, eight faculty members were given the opportunity to develop gerontology courses specific to their own disciplines, to be taught through their home departments. Finally, a series of six faculty development colloquium seminars were conducted to stimulate interest in aging among faculty and students. The interdisciplinary minor in gerontology was formally implemented as an official university program. The program was also evaluated by an external consultants, and courses were evaluated. The program is considered successful and cost-effective. (KM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED306878

"An Undergraduate, Interdisciplinary Program in Gerontology"

Interdisciplinary Program in Gerontology
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Charlotte, NC 28223
Program Coordinator: J. Thomas Puglisi

Project Funded by the U.S. Administrtion on Aging
90 AT 0151/01

Final Report: October 1987

HE 022602

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Thomas Puglisi
University of N.C. Charlotte

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

"An Undergraduate, Interdisciplinary Program in Gerontology"
90 AT 0151/01
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Charlotte, NC 28223
October 1987

PROJECT ABSTRACT

This project was designed to develop faculty expertise and experience in undergraduate teaching in gerontology and to lay the foundation for an interdisciplinary, undergraduate Minor in Gerontology. Both these objectives were successfully completed during the project period.

As a result of the project, the three core courses for the Minor in Gerontology were developed and five faculty received experience teaching these courses during the project period. In addition, eight faculty members were given the opportunity to broaden their knowledge in the area of aging by developing gerontology courses specific to their own disciplines and to be taught through their own home departments. Finally, a series of six faculty development colloquium seminars were conducted to stimulate interest in aging among a wider number of UNCC faculty and students.

Also accomplished during the project period was the formal implementation of the Interdisciplinary Minor in Gerontology as an official University program. This action ensured continued operation and funding of the program through normal university structures once OHDS-AoA support ceased. Other accomplishments included evaluation of the program by an external consultant, development of a brochure describing the program, library acquisitions in the amount of $3000, course evaluations, and program administration.

The successful implementation of the Gerontology Concentration at UNCC not only benefits UNCC's own students and the local aging services network, but also provides a model for similar institutions seeking to establish undergraduate programs in gerontology. This program proved to be an innovative, cost effective vehicle for primarily undergraduate teaching oriented institutions like UNCC to establish and maintain a high quality, interdisciplinary training program in gerontology under conditions of limited resources.

"An Undergraduate, Interdisciplinary Program in Gerontology"
90 AT 0151/01
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Charlotte, NC 28223
October 1987

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES AND NEED

The project as proposed had two major objectives. The first objective was to develop faculty expertise and experience in undergraduate teaching in gerontology. The second objective was to establish and begin implementation of a high quality interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in gerontology at UNCC which could continue to operate at the conclusion of the project's funding.

Faculty Development

A survey conducted by UNCC's Task Force on the Study of Aging in 1983 found that there were 24 courses being offered by our faculty which were perceived as having some relevance to the field of aging. Although only two of these courses focused exclusively on gerontological content, faculty and staff expressed considerable interest in the field of aging and believed that the university should expand it efforts in this area. However, a critically important concern expressed in the survey was that it would be difficult to develop a strong gerontology program if adequate resources were not available to initiate and build the program. Given their current workloads, commitments, and resources, the majority of faculty responding to the survey (including those on the Task Force itself) did not see how a first-rate program could be developed while they continued to perform all of their other regular responsibilities as well.

As proposed, the project was designed help overcome this particular obstacle. Four faculty with considerable experience in gerontology were to be be given the opportunity to develop and teach interdisciplinary courses in gerontology. (Five faculty actually received such experience during the project period.) This experience was expected to enhance their own professional development as gerontologists through

direct contact with gerontologists trained in other academic disciplines and to result in the development of a core sequence of interdisciplinary courses around which UNCC's concentration (minor) in gerontology could be built.

In addition, five faculty members were to be given the opportunity to broaden their knowledge in the area of aging by developing topics courses in gerontology which were specific to their own disciplines and interest. (Eight such courses were actually developed during the project period.) Once developed, these courses could become regular offerings in UNCC's gerontology program. Finally, a series of six faculty development colloquium seminars were proposed to stimulate interest in aging among additional UNCC faculty.

Establishing an Interdisciplinary Program

Gerontology has traditionally been recognized as a multidisciplinary field of study. Invariably, the best research, training, and service programs have come about when professionals from a variety of traditional academic disciplines have been afforded the opportunity to work together closely, each contributing a unique expertise while benefiting from the expertise of others. Consequently, a number of larger universities have created multidisciplinary institutes of gerontology staffed with professionals from a variety of disciplines. Such institutes, however, are beyond the capability of largely undergraduate, teaching oriented institutions such as UNCC.

Recognizing this practical limitation, UNCC sought to initiate an undergraduate concentration in aging built around a core sequence of interdisciplinary courses. These courses would be team-taught by gerontologists from different academic disciplines. This approach would bring together gerontological content from multidisciplinary sources, integrate theoretical and applied concepts, and communicate to our students the need for a multidisciplinary approach in meeting the needs of older persons.

Need for the Project

The Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill Metropolitan Statistical Area contains ten colleges and universities which make up the Charlotte Area Educational Consortium. These schools have cooperative arrangements in which students can take courses at

any of these schools and receive credit for graduation at their own institutions. Along with the self-survey done by UNCC's Aging Task Force in 1983, we also surveyed Consortium schools to identify their course offerings in aging, interested faculty, and future plans.

Three general conclusions were drawn based on our survey. First, even though many schools and individuals in the greater Charlotte-Mecklenburg area were pursuing educational, research, or service-oriented programs in aging, there was clearly no comprehensive aging curriculum in existence locally. Charlotte is the nation's 48th largest city with more than 325,000 people. Twenty-one percent of North Carolina's people live within 50 miles of Charlotte, making it the state's largest urban region with more than one million people. Clearly, there was, and continues to be, a great need for UNCC to take the lead in meeting the needs of students in this region who are interested in aging. Second, there were numerous resources available locally which could be developed to produce a viable combination of teaching, research, and service programs for the community. Third, as the largest educational institution in the Consortium, it seemed appropriate for UNCC to take an active, lead role in pursuing these matters more seriously.

METHODOLOGY

UNCC was faced with the problem of setting up a high quality program with limited resources. Primarily undergraduate institutions such as UNCC simply cannot garner the resources to establish and maintain comprehensive gerontology centers or institutes. The most effective way to conduct a gerontological training program at UNCC was to establish an undergraduate concentration/minor in gerontology built around a core sequence of interdisciplinary, team taught courses which would bring together professionals from different academic disciplines.

A preliminary plan for such an interdisciplinary minor was developed. Under this plan, three interdisciplinary core courses would be required for the minor. The first course would be a basic "Introduction to Gerontology" to be team taught by faculty from Arts and Sciences and Human Services or other appropriate disciplines. The second course ("Health and the Aging Process") would emphasize physiology and health

issues and would be taught by faculty from nursing and health education or biology. The third course ("Practicum Seminar in Aging") would combine an intense practicum experience with an interdisciplinary seminar designed to integrate theory, field experience, and issues of social policy. Also required would be UNCC's existing courses in the Psychology of Aging and in the Sociology of Aging and at least two elective courses in gerontology. This would result in a total requirement of 22 semester hours for the concentration/minor in gerontology.

Faculty Development and Course Development

UNCC was faced with two very practical objectives as the project period began. The first involved faculty and course development. All three interdisciplinary courses and several elective courses had to be developed if UNCC was to offer training in gerontology. The project grant supplied the resources needed so that faculty with experience in gerontology could come together to design and research the interdisciplinary courses. In addition, faculty with limited experience but interest and enthusiam for gerontology were given support for developing their expertise in this area so that a wider range of elective courses could be made available to students. The project also provided support for a series of colloquium seminars conducted during the University's regularly scheduled free periods so that UNCC faculty who had an interested in aging could be encouraged in that interest and stimulated to explore the field more fully.

Implementation of the Gerontology Minor

The second objective concerned establishment of the program concentration (minor) itself. It was crucial that official university approval for the minor in gerontology be obtained in order to ensure the continued existence of the program when the grant period ended. The proposal to implement the minor in gerontology was guided through the various university committees so that the minor in gerontology was created and recognized by the university as an official university program and given its place within the administrative hierarchy and funding structure of the university. Funds were provided through the project to support a part-time program coordinator who administered the program as well as for support staff, supplies, etc. which were necessary to establish the program.

RESULTS

Core Courses Developed and Taught

As a direct result of the project, three core courses in the Gerontology Concentration were developed: GNT 2100, Introduction to Gerontology; GNT 3100, Health and the Aging Process; and GNT 3600, Senior Seminar and Field Experience in Gerontology.

GNT 2100 was taught in Spring of 1986, Fall of 1986, and Fall of 1987. Average enrollment was approximately 25 students. GNT 2100 is a team-taught, 3-semester-hour course whose instructors come from at least two different academic disciplines. To date, faculty from the following disciplines have team-taught this course: Sociology, Human Services, Nursing.

GNT 3100 was taught in Spring of 1987. It is also a team-taught, 3-semester-hour course, and currently utilizes faculty from Nursing and Health Educaton. Enrollment in Spring of 1987 was approximately 15 students. GNT 3100 will be offered again in Spring of 1988.

GNT 3600 is a 4-semester-hour course which will be taught for the first time in Spring of 1988. The course includes two hours of class instruction and 6 hours of field placement experience each week. The Program Coordinator will teach the course and is presently working with community agencies to develop field placements for students enrolled in the course.

Elective Courses Developed and Taught

As a direct result of the project, faculty members were provided summer support to develop gerontology-related courses within their own traditional academic disciplines. These courses are to serve as elective courses for the minor in gerontology. The following eight courses were developed as a result of this support: The History of Aging (History Department); Clinical Social Work Practices with the Elderly (Department of Social Work); Ethnicity and Aging (Department of Social Work); The Older Worker (Psychology Department); Internatonal Perspectives on the Psychology of Aging (Psychology Department); Growing Old in American Literature (English Department); Aging and Public Policy (Sociology Department); and the Economics of Aging (Economics Department).

The following courses were taught or are scheduled to be taught as indicated. Spring 1987: Clinical Social Work Practices with the Aged; Aging in American Literature; International Perspectives on the Psychology of Aging. Fall 1987: Economics of Aging; Ethnicity and Aging. Spring 1988: History of Aging; Clinical Social Work Practices with the Aged; The Older Worker.

Faculty Development Colloquium Seminars Conducted

In an effort to stimulate interest in aging among UNCC faculty, six faculty development colloquium seminars were conducted as follows. Dr. Mildred Seltzer, Miami University: "Older Women, the Powerless Elite." Dr. Brian Gratton, Arizona State University: "Double Jeopardy, The Minority Aged in the United States." Dr. James Down, University of Georgia: "The Reification and Diffuseness of Age." Dr. Steve Herman, Duke University Medical Center: "Aging and Male Sexual Dysfunction." Dr. Celia Hales, UNCC, "Meeting the Information Needs of the Aged." Dr. Mildred Seltzer, Miami University, "Reunions: Individual and Societal Perspectives."

Implementation of the Minor in Gerontology

During the project period, the on-campus program proposal for the Minor in Gerontology was reviewed and approved by the Faculty Executive Committee and the Faculty Council. As a result, the Minor in Gerontology was officially implemented by the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs on April 4, 1986. This action ensured that the program would continue to operate and receive budgetary support through normal university structures once OHDS-AoA support ceased.

Also established was a Gerontology Program Advisory Committee which provides a forum for faculty, student, and community representatives to discuss and make known their perspectives regarding issues related to the structure and administration of the program. The committee consists of 12 members: 5 faculty representatives, 2 student representatives, and 5 representatives of the community who have interest or expertise in the area of aging. During the project period, committee members were recruited and appointed, and the committee began to function on a regular basis.

Dr. Mildred Seltzer, Director of Education and Training

at the Miami University Scripps Foundation Gerontology Center, served as an expert consultant for the project. Dr. Seltzer reviewed the project plan and made two site visits (Fall 1985, Spring 1987) to UNCC during which she held discussions with administrators and faculty. Based upon these site visits, Dr. Seltzer prepared two reports detailing recommedations for improvement of the program (see Appendices).

During the project period, a four page color brochure was completed describing UNCC's new Interdisciplinary Minor in Gerontology. The brochure contains detailed information on the requirements for the Minor in Gerontology, the required courses and their course descriptions, elective courses, and related information about the University and its requirements. Two thousand copies of the brochure were printed (see Appendices).

In conjunction with the University's Reference Librarian, the Gerontology Program was able to make an informed and professional selection of books and journals in the field of aging which were then added to the library's holdings in geronology. The project grant provided a total of $3000 for this purpose, all of which was committed through book and journal orders before the end of the project period.

Course Evaluations

Student and Instructor Evaluations were conducted on all courses offered through the Interdisciplinary Program in Gerontology during the project period. Based on these evaluations, significant improvements were made in the structure of the program's "Introduction to Gerontology" course as well as in several of the program's elective courses. Because of their importance in maintaining the quality of the program's offerings, Student and Instructor Evaluations will be conducted on all courses offered through the program.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUMMARY

This project had two primary, or major, objectives. The first was to develop faculty expertise and experience in undergraduate teaching in gerontology. The second was to establish and begin implementation of a high quality interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in gerontology at UNCC which could continue to operate at the conclusion of the

project period. Both of these objectives were successfully completed. During the project period, both core and elective courses for the gerontology minor were developed and taught, and the progam itself was formally established as a University program.

The successful implementation of the Gerontology Concentration at UNCC should benefit not only UNCC's own students and the local aging services network by training students relative to the needs of older persons, but should also serve as a model for similar institutions seeking to establish undergraduate programs in gerontology. As designed and implemented, this program proved to be an innovative, cost effective vehicle for primarily undergraduate teaching oriented institutions like UNCC to establish and maintain a high quality, nterdisciplinary training program in gerontology under conditions of limited resources.

Gerontology is an emerging field that focuses on social issues which will become increasingly important as the population of older people grows in the coming decades. UNCC's Interdisciplinary Program in Gerontology, as established during the project period, can lend itself to expansion in a variety of formats, depending upon the needs of UNCC's students and of the Charlotte area. As a result, the opportunities to develop a program which will benefit both the university and the society at large are considerable.

Over the next five years, the program intends to establish a firm foundation by (a) evaluating and continuing to improve its core courses; (b) encouraging the development of additional gerontology-related courses which can serve as elective courses in the program; (c) developing additional practicum sites in which students can obtain direct experience in aging; (d) increasing efforts to recruit students into the program; (e) developing a research agenda and interdisiplinary research and service projects involving gerontology faculty and students; and (f) increasing consultation with the Community Advisory committee in order to strengthen the program's links to the local "aging network." The program also intends to explore possibilities for exansion in order to offer (a) an undergraduate certificate in gerontology; (b) programs for returning students, gradate students, consortium students, and non-degree students; (c) continuing education programs and workshops.